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SHORT COMMUNICATION

Behavioural observations of *Philanthus triangulum* (Fab.) (Hymenoptera).—

Philanthus triangulum (Fab.), the European bee wolf, is a species of solitary wasp found throughout Western Europe. Over the past 7–8 years it has been undergoing a population resurgence after a period of reduced numbers. A newly established colony of *P. triangulum* was discovered in the grounds of St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey, Surrey. This colony had probably only been present for one to three years before the date of discovery (June 1996). The colony was observed to establish on the same site over the next two years and in 1998 a new colony was observed in a separate location approximately 150 metres from the first. Due to its small size (10–20 individuals) this probably established in 1998, possibly as an offshoot of the first colony.

The first colony was the focus of a short period of field study during the summer of 1998. During the period of study, on several occasions (4–5) two wasps were observed using one nest entrance. Each wasp would open the entrance itself (i.e. clear the plug of soil put in place to prevent parasitism), and close the entrance after it. The wasps would remain in the nest burrow together and then leave separately. There was no evidence of aggression, as was sometimes seen when one female entered another's nest in order to plunder paralysed worker bees from the nest.

There are several possible explanations for this behaviour. The females could have been sharing nest entrances, but have had separate nest burrows underground. This is the most likely explanation, as many other species of solitary wasp show this behaviour. The nest sharing could have been accidental, due to misidentification of nest sites. This was observed occurring at several different burrows so this is less likely. Alternatively the females could have been exhibiting some degree of social behaviour. No papers so far found have described any of these behaviours for *P. triangulum*. Whichever is true this novel behaviour is worthy of extra study.—
JASON MOORE, Selwyn College, Cambridge CB3 9DQ.